

## § 1940.303

official will prepare, as required, Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions and Class I and Class II assessments.

(2) *District Office.* When the approval official for the action under review is located at the District Office level, that official will prepare, as required, Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions and Class I and Class II assessments or may delegate this responsibility to either:

(i) The District Office staff member having primary responsibility for assembling the associated pre-application, application or other case materials, analyzing the materials and developing recommendations for the approval official, or

(ii) A County Office staff member having the same responsibilities as the District Office member, if the action is initiated at the County Office level.

(3) *State Program Chief.* For actions approved within the State Office, the Chief will prepare, as required, Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions and Class I and II assessments or may delegate this responsibility to either:

(i) The appropriate State Office Loan Specialist, if not the State Environmental Coordinator (SEC),

(ii) An architect or engineer on the Chief's staff who is not the SEC, or

(iii) A District or County Office staff member located within the office in which the action is initiated and having the responsibilities outlined in paragraph (i)(2)(i) of this section.

(4) *State Environmental Coordinator.* EIS's for actions within the approval authority of County Supervisors, District Directors, and State Office officials.

(5) *Assistant Administrators for Programs.* Checklists, assessments, and EIS's for all actions initiated within their program office.

(6) *Program Support Staff.* Checklists, assessments, and EIS's that the Deputy Administrator for Program Operations requests be done.

(j) *Water resource project.* Includes any type of construction which would result in either impacts on water quality and the beneficial uses that water quality criteria are designed to protect or any change in the free-flowing charac-

## 7 CFR Ch. XVIII (1-1-09 Edition)

teristics of a particular river or stream to include physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the waterway. This definition encompasses construction projects within and along the banks of rivers or streams, as well as projects involving withdrawals from, and discharges into such rivers or streams. Projects which require Corps of Engineers dredge and fill permits are also water resource projects.

### § 1940.303 General policy.

(a) FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 will consider environmental quality as equal with economic, social, and other relevant factors in program development and decision-making processes.

(b) In assessing the potential environmental impacts of its actions, FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 will consult early with appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies and other organizations to provide decision-makers with both the technical and human aspects of environmental planning.

(c) When adverse environmental impacts are identified, either direct or indirect, an examination will be made of alternative courses of action, including their potential environmental impacts. The objective of the environmental review will be to develop a feasible alternative with the least adverse environmental impact. The alternative of not proceeding with the proposal will also be considered particularly with respect to the need for the proposal.

(d) If no feasible alternative exists, including the no-action alternative, measures to mitigate the identified adverse environmental impacts will be included in the proposal.

(e) The performance of environmental reviews and the consideration of alternatives will be initiated as early as possible in the FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 application review process so that the Agency will be in the most flexible and objective position to deal with these considerations.

### § 1940.304 Special policy.

(a) *Land use.* (1) FmHA or its successor agency under Public Law 103-354 recognizes that its specific mission of